(c) Government has not received any such information from Smt. Asha Patil.

(d) Does not arise.

Number of Haj Pilgrims

446. DR V. MAITREYAN : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the total number of Haj Pilgrims going to Saudi Arabia every year from India;

(b) whether the passport requirement was not existing till now as per the agreement between both the countries;

(c) whether the Saudi authorities have requested for compulsory passport and visa requirement from the current year; and

(d) if so, whether Government is taking up the matter with the Saudi Authorities and what would be the stand of Government for future Haj Pilgrims to Saudi Arabia?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) The total number of pilgrims proceeded for Haj through the Haj Committee of India during the last five years is as under:

Haj 2005	—	80772
Haj 2006 I	—	99660
Haj 2006 II	—	108816
Haj 2007	—	110415
Haj 2008	—	122116

(b) Yes.

(c) Yes. The Saudi government has informed that all Haj pilgrims should travel on international passport from Haj 2009, on which visa will be endorsed.

(d) The Indian Mission in Saudi Arabia has already taken up the matter with Saudi authorities to defer the requirement of international Passport for Indian Haj pilgrims for one year more.

Issue of transit journey and transit business

447. SHRI MATILAL SARKAR: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the issue of transit journey and transit business from the North- Eastern States to Kolkata through Bangladesh has been taken up with the new Government at Bangladesh very recently;

(b) if so, the results thereof;

(c) whether there has been any development in trades and commerce between India and Bangladesh after institution of Sheikh Hasina Government; and

(d) the commodities getting emphasis during discussion?